

REVOLUTION

socialist youth movement

ISSUE 89

Recruiters of death
Keep out of our colleges!



also inside

• UCL STUDENTS KICK OUT ARMY - VICIOUS WITCH HUNT
FOLLOWS • IRAQ FIGHTING INTENSIFIES • AND MORE...

a word from the editor

★ BY JO ★ LONDON ★

Ever had an argument with a capitalist? One of their big claims is that capitalism is "efficient". Now, as we watch the global market implode this argument is unravelling. The Financial Services Watchdog admitted that 'they didn't have a clue' that Northern Rock was about to collapse. Across the pond investment bank Bear Stearns shares which have dropped in value faster than the Antarctic icebergs are melting. As fun as it is for us anti-capitalists (we were right and you were wrong suckers!) to watch the poisonous system self-combust, we need to plan to fight the attempts of the bosses to make us pay for the crisis. There are some promising signs. In America demonstrating homeowners highlighted - who are not a 'propertied class' but in fact workers who were enticed into borrowing huge amounts which they now cannot afford to repay. All the while the Federal Reserve dish out millions to save the very banks that have caused this mayhem - leaving the people who will find themselves out on the streets with nothing. In Britain the government are going out of their way to bail out rich while public sector workers get pay cuts and job losses. The working classes can kiss goodbye to their public services, schools and NHS according to New Labour - while they continue to fight their imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There's never been a more urgent time to build the fight back against the economic attacks, the rise of racism and imperialist war! Join us!

Revolution conference report

★ BY REBECCA ★ LEEDS★

At the 2008 Revolution Conference, the main issues discussed were climate change, oppression, the occupation of Palestine and the War on Terror. We also discussed building Revolution and what issues we will campaign around this year.

Climate change is something that threatens millions with displacement in a world where whether or not you can cross a border depends on the colour of your skin and your bank balance. Following the success of the Red Alert teach-in the day before Revolution Conference, we agreed that it's an issue that we must continue to prioritise and campaign around.

We discussed the Israeli occupation of Palestine - which is armed to the teeth by the US, UK and other imperialist countries. It is part of the War on Terror, where the US and UK are systematically targeting and invading any country whose government doesn't promise them utter compliance and access to oil reserves. Iraq and Afghanistan are already under occupation and Iran, Pakistan and Venezuela are threatened. We call for victory to all those resisting imperialism. The working class must turn the anti-imperialist struggle into a revolutionary struggle for power - to defeat the armies of Bush, Brown, Exxon and Halliburton.

In the discussion around campaigning the idea of organising a demonstration in Leeds against the siege of Gaza was raised, which is now going ahead

on Saturday 26th April.

We also discussed the history of the suffragettes movement. By learning historical lessons we can see where mistakes were made and what lessons we need to learn in order to win the battles of today. In our struggles against imperialism, racism, climate change, poverty and for the rights of the oppressed, we see the same misleadership as we saw ninety years ago with the suffragettes - ultimately based on the idea that we can reform away the problems that capitalism causes.

Popstars go cap in hand to the British government and ask them to please do something about poverty in Africa, forgetting that this is a government that causes African poverty! We demand that governments and companies across the world dump the debt and offer solidarity to those in Africa resisting the IMF, World Bank and all the companies that are stealing from the African working class and peasantry. We want to force the imperialist countries to stop exploiting Africa and we can't do this by appealing to the consciences of thieves - we have to challenge their power and we have to win power from them.

In the anti-war demonstrations of 2003 we said that demonstrations are good but they are not enough. They are a show of strength - of the power that the working class and youth together can wield. But this isn't enough - we have to use this

power to smash imperialism otherwise the wars will continue.

A member of our Czech section attended the conference and spoke about our fight for a youth international. She said that the struggle for socialism can't just take place in one country; but must be a global struggle. We must stand openly alongside the working class and youth of all countries and everyone resisting imperialism and organise with them in our struggle for socialism. In the anti-war movement, the anti-capitalist movement, in the struggles in France against the CPE laws; it is youth across the world who are the most radical and the most militant. We stand alongside the working class and fight together against the governments and the bosses. But the youth are rarely represented in the leadership of these struggles, it is always the reformists with their radical rhetoric but their conciliatory actions who lead us into defeat. We fight for a youth international so youth across the world can link up their struggles and win the leadership of these struggles to take them beyond reforms to a revolutionary struggle for socialism.

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Columbia: US watchdog in South America

★ BY Tim ★ UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX ★

On March 1st Colombian troops crossed the border into Ecuador to attack the peasant guerrilla organisation FARC, and killed more than 20 people. Colombia's right-wing President Alvaro Uribe proudly announced that he took full responsibility for the operation. Imitating the style of his closest ally George W Bush he appeared at a press conference and proclaimed that "today we have taken another step against terrorism, that does not respect borders".

In an angry response, Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, called Uribe a "liar" and "a lackey of North-American Imperialism". Along with his close ally President Correa of Ecuador, he deployed thousands of troops to the border with Colombia, cut-off all diplomatic ties, and threatened war if Colombian troops entered Venezuela.

The Colombian government, apparently taken aback by the strength of the response, staged a humiliating climb-down: Uribe apologised to Ecuador and offered to pay for any damage caused. Troops have been demobilised and diplomatic relations resumed. Trying to divert attention from this public defeat and economic problems at home, however, the Colombian government has now accused Chavez of donating money to FARC and of militarily supporting them; both of which Chavez denies.

Crises like this are undoubtedly part of a global hate campaign designed to turn Venezuela into a pariah state for daring to challenge US imperialism. Venezuela has been in a revolutionary situation since mass protests overthrew a military coup against Chavez in 2002, and the government is using oil revenue for social reforms at home and to back like-minded governments in the region. The imperialists also fear Venezuela industrialising its oil industry and becoming less dependent on multinationals. Finally, by paying off the IMF debt of countries like Argentina, Chavez has ensured that those regimes don't need to sign up to further economic "restructuring": looting



Protest against cross border attacks

by another name.

On the other hand Venezuela, like the rest of Latin America, faces an economic crisis. Instead of solving rising prices by cutting capitalists' profits - making them lower prices and expropriating their property if they don't - Chavez has tried to solve inflation by holding down wages. Reformists who promise us a "nicer capitalism" are, in times of crisis, forced to do this, because they refuse to challenge private property of the capitalists. To diffuse internal contradictions, Chavez has tried to unite bosses and workers around the national flag, hoping that workers will put aside class struggle in favour of patriotism.

The imperialists' aggression towards Venezuela, like that carried out by the Pentagon's puppets in Colombia, shows how much they fear this revolutionary situation, and want to end it by any means. Youth in the west need to organise to fight our leaders lies and

to oppose any violence and sanctions against Venezuela. In the case that it is attacked we must without hesitation say "Victory To Venezuela!"

However, let's not forget that reforms in Venezuela have been won through mass militant action, and the working class is the only real progressive force in society. Instead of backing Chavez in his attempts to unite the classes, we must support Venezuelan youth and workers as they fight to push the revolution forward to its next stage: smashing the state and expropriating the capitalists' property. This will help Colombian workers much more than some false "liberation" by the bourgeois Venezuelan state, which in fact only opposes Uribe to further its own interests. Instead of letting capitalists divide us, workers and youth must maintain our unity against the real opponent - capitalism - whatever flag it drapes itself in.

Biofuels: Taking food from the poor to put in rich people's cars



★ BY JOHN ★ LEEDS ★

When it comes to halting climate change and reducing carbon emissions, no one cares more than Western governments and multinational oil companies. Or rather... no one cares more about coming up with insane false solutions to climate change that sound interesting but actually make the situation much worse - usually at the expense of the global poor!

Carbon trading was one idea like this, allowing carbon credits to be bought and sold by companies on the world market. Creating another market to solve a problem caused by the market system - genius! Carbon trading has made no significant impact on climate change, as it just allows bigger companies to buy greater polluting power and the cap wasn't set low enough to actually reduce existing carbon emissions.

Bio-fuels are unfortunately yet another hair brained scheme - where the environment will suffer while the big bosses make big money. Under a European agreement to cut carbon emissions, Britain has agreed to switch 10% of transport fuel to bio-fuels by the year 2020.

Put simply, Bio-fuels are made by using the biomass of certain plants in order to make petrol and diesel, the idea being that as the crops grow they absorb some of the carbon dioxide which will later be released when the fuel is burned in engines.

However, the science becomes more complicated when you realise that in order to grow the crops and refine them into fuel all the usual processes of agriculture and industrial refining must take place - the machinery

required, the fertilisers, the factories and so on, all adding to carbon emissions. It becomes still more complicated when politics and profit come into play. In Brazil, Paraguay and Indonesia, massive deforestation has taken place to find cheap farming land for bio-fuel production. Deforestation often results in the burning of large areas of forest for clearance and to fertilise the future farming land with ash - releasing huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. Trees and forest areas are also far bigger retainers for carbon than intensively farmed cash crops.

Bio-fuel production does not just affect carbon emissions, habitats and wildlife. It affects food supplies for some of the poorest people in the world. Food prices around the world are skyrocketing. Over the last two years, global food prices have risen by 75%, sparking hunger protests from Africa to China. This is mostly due to the rise in oil prices across the world and the increasing costs of production, transportation and importing. As the food crisis deepens, staple foods like soya are turned into fuel to export to the West for profit and other foods are replaced with bio-fuel crops such as rapeseed and also exported. If European bio-fuel targets were to be met by Europe, 40% of agricultural land would need to be turned to bio-fuel production - yet Latin American and Asian soils will be used for this immense task at the expense of their own dwindling food supplies.

A real alternative to fossil fuels lies not with bio-fuels produced for profit - at the expense of the global South - but for democratically

planned energy production using genuine renewable energy such as solar power, windfarms and hydro-electricity, controlled and distributed by the working class in a socialist system for need - not greed!

Protest against Brown on Biofuels

**Tuesday April 15th,
outside Downing Street
6.00pm**

***Organised by Campaign
against Climate Change and
Biofuelwatch***

- STOP THE RTFO
- STOP A MASSIVE EXPANSION IN AGROFUELS
- STOP A TRAGEDY UNFOLDING

Climate Change, Neoliberalism & the Global South

★ BY NAT ★ (LONDON) ★

The era of 'globalisation' has strengthened the power of the self-appointed capitalist, world leaders: the G8. This is a group of the eight "most industrialised nations"; Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and, of course, the US. This body is unelected and accountable to no-one, but has enormous economic and military power and therefore a massive influence on the poor, developing countries. The G8 are not looking to solve global poverty, but increase the conditions that create it: the neo-liberal economic model that tears down barriers to trade and forces poor countries to open up their markets.

At the 2005 G8 in Scotland the protests were high jacked by the likes of Bob Geldof and Bono who, rather than joining the radical youth and trade unionists, instead made bogus-deals with the enemy - the G8 - to 'make poverty history'. All the while enjoying the fruits of the root cause of poverty - capitalism. As the leaders met in Scotland, a humanitarian crisis was unfolding in Niger as result of drought and locust plagues, so that about 3.6 million of the country's 11.5 million were starving. Even when shocking footage of starving children was released the capitalists sought to deny the scale of the crisis and justified not sending massive amounts of food because it would "destroy their economy" once harvest came in - in contrast to their usual willingness to destroy economies by flooding them with cheap imports. Actually in Niger, there was food in the marketplace but people were starving because they could not afford to buy it since the IMF imposed VAT on all food stuffs. So, rich countries are living off the poor- à la capitalism! At the same time it is often those in developing countries that suffer the worst effects of climate change, because of locations & poor infrastructure. In 2007 Cyclone Sidr hit Bangladesh leaving over 3,200 people dead and, at one point, 80% of the country underwater.

Climate change hits the global south the hardest - areas in China such as Linfen for

example, which is engulfed by emissions from cars and industry, especially the burning of coal. The poor air quality means that bronchitis, pneumonia and lung cancer are common in residents. Laws are lax in this area so labour is cheap and the production is more polluting- multinational corporations make a killing.

For some environmentalists the reason for such problems is that natural resources are too cheap, and therefore are not reflective of their true value that includes the social and ecological costs of extraction. But part of the reason for low prices is debt in the global south, which means that the first priority for poor countries is to service their debts, meaning they have no choice but to expand raw material exports to world markets. The huge amount of debt still owing is largely due to the unfairness of repayment schemes: between 1970 and 2002 Africa as a whole paid back \$550 billion in loans, more than the \$540 it borrowed, but still has "debts" of \$295 billion. The background for this is that since the post-WW2 boom, extending credit to developing countries has been an important way for imperialist countries to maximise their profit. The era of globalisation has seen massive increase in debt on world scale, from \$75 billion in 1970, rising to \$900 billion in 1985, and a massive \$2 trillion in 2005. So, governments spend such a large proportion of their revenue on debt repayment that little is left for health, education, the welfare state - let alone for combating climate change and protecting the environment. This, as usual, affects women first: as public services in poor countries are destroyed by privatisation or just dropped in favour of debt repayments, women, as carers, are left to pick up the pieces. For example, a study of Zimbabwe found that when school fees were raised, girls dropped out first, and when health spending was cut by a third, the number of women dying in childbirth doubled.

Problems are also caused by aid with imposed conditions, such as IMF structural

adjustment programmes. In Brazil, where IMF cuts in 1999 resulted in a 19% slashing of the state environmental enforcement budget. If that wasn't enough, the unemployment resulting from job cuts forced many ordinary workers and peasants to clear larger areas of rainforest simply to live on. Between 2002 and 2006, an area of rainforest the size of South Carolina was cleared. This means that the forests are no longer able to do their job - absorb Co2 - and their destruction is blamed for up to 25% of global Co2 emissions. It is second only to the energy sector as source of greenhouse gases. Amazingly, one day's deforestation is equivalent to carbon footprint of 8 million people flying to New York.

It is a small number of economists that dictate the lives of millions of workers and peasants in the developing world- the lack of democracy and control over production and economic conditions are key features of capitalism. While we - or those of us over 18 - can vote for parliamentary "representatives" every 5 years or so, the real decisions that affect production and distribution of goods, and the services we need to survive, are consistently made in board rooms by unelected, unaccountable CEOs. The needs of the majority of the world and the environment are completely subordinated to the blind drive to profit. The difference under globalisation and neoliberalism is that this has intensified & expanded to a world scale. This means that our answer to it must also be a global solution - not a return to small-scale capitalism, but a democratically planned economy, where all decisions on production are made rationally and take into account needs of the majority and of the environment. It is radical youth and workers who have no stake in the neo-liberal profit machine and yet all the power to change it. It is radical youth and workers who have proven that when they take to the streets they invoke change.

It is radical youth and workers who will be on the frontline when capitalism is eventually defeated.

Troops out of Iraq - recruiters of death out of our colleges!

★ BY SHAM ★ UCL UNIVERSITY ★

On March 5th students at University College London's students' union voted to pass a motion in its Annual General Meeting to ban the Officer Training Corps, University Royal Navy Units, University of London Air Squadron and all other military organisations from the union's fresher's events and other union sponsored events, Union premises, and student run media. The motion was proposed by the university's Stop The War Society in which members of Revolution at the university play a leading role in.

Military recruiters had previously been given access to UCL Union's "fresher's fayre" and are allowed by nearly all other British universities. Approximately fifty per cent of British military officers are recruited through university based military organisations. The military actively recruits in working class estates and target working class students at university. With student debt rising to crippling levels, more and more students from less privileged backgrounds are being priced-out of education. Military recruiters know that going into local comprehensive schools can provide a great source of "expendable" troops - it seems that working class lives are worth less than others to the British government. The Labour government is closing down our youth centres, our sports halls and selling off our parks to "property developers" who'd rather make a profit by building yuppie flats. Most of us can't afford to go out and do things like go to the cinema or to watch the football because of the over-inflated prices the fat cat owners want young people to pay. For many youth the only way to pay for an education is to join up to organisations like the TA and OTC.

The passing of the motion prompted a backlash in the tabloid press - who claimed we were being disrespectful to soldiers. What a joke! It is the government that are sending working class youth to die in imperialist wars - could you be more "disrespectful"? Socialists fight for working class men and women, who have been conscripted by poverty and boredom to be



brought home straight away. It's the Generals and CEO's of the oil companies that are sending young people to fight in illegal and immoral wars - to die for their profits. REVOLUTION says that all soldiers should have the right to organise separately from their officers, the right to refuse to carry out immoral orders and the right to report the brutality of life on the front lines without suffering censorship.

This is part of an ongoing campaign by students, lecturers and teachers to kick out military recruitment from their schools, colleges and campuses. At the end of March the annual conference of the teachers' union, the NUT, passed a motion to oppose the MOD's activity in schools. At the moment recruiters make up lesson plans and hand-outs that serve only one purpose: to glamourise war and to sign-up more young people. A teacher from an East London school said that the materials used did not show the realities of conflict. He said that if the hand-outs were to be realistic, they'd have to say "join the Army and we will send you to carry out the imperialist occupation of other people's countries, join the Army and we will send you to

bomb, shoot and possibly torture fellow human beings in other countries, join the Army and we will send you probably poorly equipped into situations where people will try to shoot or kill you because you are occupying other people's countries, join the Army, and if you survive and come home, possibly injured or mentally damaged, you and your family will be shabbily treated." Absolutely!

REVOLUTION supports the teacher's actions and calls on all anti-war and anti-imperialist youth to stop military recruitment in their schools by passing motions through their student unions, by leafleting the careers fayres that the military recruit at and to stand up to military recruiters pressing working class youth to fight their illegal wars of occupation.

For more information on stopping recruitment in schools and colleges, and for a model motion to put through at student unions, email:

info@worldrevolution.org.uk

Alternative oath of allegiance

Labour's lawyer Lord Goldsmith - the man who said the Iraq war was 'legal' - has had another bright idea: all young people leaving school should swear an 'oath of allegiance' to Queen and country.

Yes, that's right, an oath of allegiance to the country whose rulers get rich by bleeding the global south dry, who enforce their global power through aggressive wars, like in Iraq and Afghanistan, and exploiting working people in Britain.

The Queen is their sovereign - the sovereign and representative of the ruling class in Britain - she's not our representative!

Here's REVOLUTION's Alternative Oath of Allegiance.

WE SWEAR ALLEGIANCE

- To everyone fighting the oppressive system
- To the struggle against war and occupation

- To students resisting military recruitment
- To workers resisting cuts in jobs, pay, healthcare and pensions
- To protestors across the global south demanding an end to soaring food prices
- To the struggles of the international working class - who have no country!

WE REFUSE ALLEGIANCE -

- To the Queen, the princes and any unelected sovereign
- To "our country" - we reject all patriotic LIES
- To "our" country's barbaric wars of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan - troops out now!
- To the bosses, the rich, the multimillionaires and corporations
- To all the racists and the bigots - Muslims, refugees, minorities are not to blame



Right wing attempt coup at UCL

The experience of banning the military recruiters from UCL has proved once again that while the government bombard us with rhetoric about exporting democracy in the UK there is still a lot of room for improvement - to say the least! The motion on the military was passed at the Union's Annual General Meeting that 325 students attended - the most since 2003. This is the highest democratic body in the student union as it is open to all students to come and hear discussions and vote on how the union is run. Decisions made at AGMs have the most authority because they are made by the students themselves, not full time sabbatical officers or representatives. Or so we thought.

The meeting passed a lot of progressive motions such as twinning with two Palestinian universities, capping top-up fees and mandating our delegates to vote against the anti-democratic Governance Review at NUS conference. However it became very clear that the right only support student democracy when it doesn't contradict their own interests and politics.

Almost instantly after the motions were passed began accusations of misconduct in the meeting. There were claims from the right that the meeting wasn't quorate (didn't have enough people present to make it representative) - which it was. And claims that it was chaired unfairly - which it wasn't. Just a classic example of the right throwing their toys out the pram when they don't get their own way.

If a decision made by an AGM is so widely disagreed with, there are democratic means by which to change it: you can call an emergency general meeting and overturn it. But this was not a time for democracy - and with democracy, you can always lose, as they had discovered. So instead the decision made by over 300 students was overturned by a committee meeting at which only three people were present to vote. What's more the general secretary of the student union who had chaired the AGM and is a known supporter of the Stop the War Society was suspended on completely unfounded accusations. All of this is completely unconstitutional, of course, but it had become clear that the

right and the union executive had thrown the constitution out the window. There was up roar about this amongst students who had voted for the motions and we spent a hard week leafleting, gathering signatures and held a press conference which 70 people attended.

So there was still hope... the anti-war left have a slim majority on the unions council which is the elected decision making body of the union and just in the nick of time, in the last meeting of the term, we voted to uphold and implement the decisions of the AGM and to reinstate Sam Godwin: the general secretary of the union.

The last few weeks have been invaluable for the Stop the War Society at UCL. Not only because we have made an impact on union policy and withdrawn our material and moral support for the illegal wars in the Middle East but also because we've learnt that we will have to fight hard to win gains against the right in our university because their rhetoric about democracy becomes totally empty when it is not democracy on their terms.

The profit system in crisis - let's declare class war!

★ BY LUKE ★ LSE ★

You know capitalism's in trouble when there's a run on a bank (when account holders start withdrawing their money *en masse* throwing the bank into crisis). And it was a run on a bank that made the "Credit Crunch" a reality for millions of workers in Britain last summer, when Northern Rock announced it was running low on reserves and asked the government for help. The government has since secured Northern Rock with some £55 billion pounds in tax payers' money and formally nationalised it, with Northern Rock's shareholders doing very nicely.

But Northern Rock was just the first British casualty of a much wider crisis - one that started in the United States' so-called "Sub Prime" mortgage market. This was the name given to mortgages sold to impoverished American workers who weren't able to take out normal mortgages. Real-estate salesman sold these people the lie that it didn't matter if they couldn't make the repayments, because, as house prices were rising, they could always just sell the house and pay off the mortgage. But houses prices in America couldn't keep rising forever. As the market reached its peak, prices began to fall, more and more people with sub-prime mortgages defaulted on their debts. The result? Well, it doesn't take a genius to work out that as more and more re-possessed houses appeared on the market house prices began to fall.

But this scenario alone would not be enough to create the kind of financial meltdown that is now threatened. One leading investment bank has even predicted that the total banking losses from the current crisis could come to a staggering \$1 trillion dollars. How is that possible? Well, the answer lies in the murky world of global financial markets. You see, the sub-prime mortgages were actually bundled up and sold as a package of debts and then traded, creating a market in complex bundles of debt. As the value of debts tended to increase it became a profitable market to be in. Capitalist x would buy debt package y, calculating that the next day, the value of y would go up and he could sell it on at a profit. When the good times rolled on the financial markets, city slickers in Wall Street pocketed massive bonuses. But these



"good times" can't last forever, now we're witnessing the beginning of the bad times... when the boom turns to bust.

This shows just how irrational the capitalist system is. Instead of having a basic right to a decent house, millions of poor Americans were encouraged to take on massive debts, then made homeless when they couldn't pay. All so a tiny minority at the top could accumulate massive sums by trading not in goods and services... but in debt. This is not just a few bad policies or decisions either, but a set of circumstances that are fundamental to the capitalist system. A system which sees production and consumption have become totally separated to be connected by the market. Capitalists produce things because they want to sell them at a profit on the marketplace. A worker is not given x amount of the product he makes for the labour he provides to make it, and in return is given a wage that he can then buy other commodities to live.

The crazy world of finance emerges when it becomes much more profitable for capitalists to invest - not in production, by for example, buying a factory - but by making speculative investments in the financial markets. As a result whole markets emerge not only in debt, but also currencies, stocks in companies. Marx and Lenin described this whole financial

process as "parasitism" as it lives off the "real world" of production of goods.

What we are witnessing now though, is not just a crisis of finance, but a crisis that started with finance and is quickly spreading to production itself. The big multinational producers also take out loans to finance production and manage big debts. Now they face the problem that the lenders - the big banks - don't want to carry on lending for fear they won't get a return. As the multi-nationals struggle to meet arrears and maintain output, then the economy can slowdown and even crash.

At the root of all this is capitalism's drive to profit. Instead of producing for the need of everyone (as we would under socialism) capitalists produce for profit. Not only is this unjust, but it also makes capitalism prone to crisis, as a result of its own laws and tendencies. In a nutshell, capitalism is the only system in human history that will go into crisis when there is too much produced... Too many goods than can be profitably sold on the market place, too much capital that can be re-invested at a profit. As the economic crisis starts to bite, the bosses' will try to make the workers and poor of the world pay for it - we can't let them. In the face of every attack on our standards of living and social rights, let's declare class war!

Support striking Shelter workers!

★ BY RIA ★ LEEDS ★

High profile strikes in Britain have recently been in the public sector - whether amongst postal workers or tube drivers - but this month has seen workers at Shelter organising strike action in the voluntary sector. Staff at the homeless charity voted to take industrial action in protest at new employment contracts aimed at attacking pay and cutting costs. The new contract requires staff to work an extra 2.5 hours a week at no extra pay, all pay increases have been suspended and several staff will be made redundant. The employees that are worse hit are those on low incomes - many of whom will ironically find it difficult to pay their rent or mortgage (especially given current high interest rates) if these changes are pushed through.

On the picket line, placards read: 'Donations for people in need - not for plush offices', exposing the recent expensive refurbishment to Shelter's London headquarters. This is just an example of how the bosses are planning to turn Shelter from a charity focussed on the needs of the client to a contractor bidding for government commissions in order to line management's pockets. Managers have given themselves a massive pay rise in recent years - yet their staff are

now receiving pay cuts!

Shelter bosses have been using bullying and intimidation tactics throughout the dispute - threatening disciplinary procedures to those who refuse to sign the new terms and conditions, and even calling the police to break up the strike. They are also pushing a policy where they can sack staff in order to re-employ them on worse conditions.

After the second day of strike action, management caved in and agreed to put the changes on hold as well as enter into talks with the union. After two days of talks with Unite and TGWU union reps at ACAS (an employment mediation service), all the management have offered is a pathetic one-off compensation payment equivalent to their 2008 incremental pay rise. The union reps have recommended that members reject this pathetic offer, in a ballot starting on the 26th of March.

For an organisation that claims to care for the welfare of those less fortunate, Shelter are treating their staff with complete disregard. This attack on staff is not beneficial to anyone (apart from managers) as it will result in a poorer service delivered to those who need it most.

Staff at Shelter are the first amongst the



voluntary sector to strike as a result of worsening pay. As long as the government are outsourcing public services to the voluntary sector on the cheap, NGO bosses will continue to attack their workers' contractual rights in order to gain more profitable contracts.

We need to support the struggle of these workers, and put pressure on local authorities to provide better public services, instead of paying tertiary organisations to do it for them.

Victory to civil servants!

★ BY SEAN ★ HUDDERSFIELD ★

On 17th and 18th of March 80,000 workers at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) - the section of the civil service which runs Job Centres - walked out over job losses, closures and privatisation. These cut backs form part of a government plan to attack public sector workers' benefits before the economic crisis really bites.

From a government notorious for lying about the brutality of their plans (we were never told of the millions who would be killed before the Iraq war) they're jobs minister, James Parnell, was remarkably open about their "ambitious" plans for the benefits system: "one million people off incapacity benefit, 300,000 more single parents at work, one million more older workers". Meanwhile, Caroline Flint, Labour's Housing Minister, has announced that all new council tenants will

have to be in paid work, and this will soon be extended to existing tenants!

So why is the government launching this attack on the working class and being so blatant about it? It's partly an effort to secure the support of the bosses in the wake of an economic recession which will lead to higher unemployment with more people being forced onto what little benefits exist. In a recession the key aim of the bosses' will be to force workers to accept lower pay - increasing the profits of the bosses while everyone else suffers. Workers in the DWP are fighting job cuts which will make the process of gaining and maintaining benefits much harder. They're also fighting the idea of a "welfare market" where private businesses will bid to run the benefits system - and as we all know profit is king in private enterprise, and the less benefits these companies give

out, would mean more profit.

The PCS has been fighting this dispute, and similar ones, for over a year now without success. The failure is in the strategy that is handed down by the trade union bureaucracy of one or two day strikes. The problem is the government can prepare for one day, two day, even seven day or more strikes. What they can't prepare for is all out continuous strikes. But this isn't what the trade union bureaucracy want - if they went for all out strike action it would put themselves in an immediate, massive confrontation with the government.

What is needed is for workers and working class youth to organise independently of the trade union bureaucracy. PCS workers need a rank and file movement!

★ ONE WORLD ★ ONE BATTLE ★

REVOLUTION 9

End the seige of gaza!



★ BY JO ★ UCL ★

The statement made last month by Israeli deputy defence minister, Matan Vilnai, claiming that the Palestinians were 'bringing upon themselves a greater shoah' (holocaust) exposed Israel yet again for what it really stands for: the oppression and annihilation of the Palestinian people, not a negotiating peace. Vilnai's statement came in the midst of a bloody Israeli attack in which, within five days, Al Jazeera reported had left 'at least 116 Palestinians dead, including 22 children and 12 women'.

In the light of recent events, it is important to stress once again that this is not a "symmetrical conflict" (as its sometimes called) - a fight between two equal sides. One glance at the casualty figures will show you this much. In the space of a year untargeted Palestinians rockets killed three Israelis whereas in Gaza alone, the Israeli Occupation Forces have filled over 180 Palestinians since the beginning of 2008. Similarly Israel, as the US's watchdog in the Middle East, receives more US aid than all of Africa - that's military funding to the tune of billions of dollars a year making it the fourth biggest military power in the world. Meanwhile Palestinians in Gaza live in absolute poverty on the most crowded strip of land in the world.

This is just the most recent chapter in the blockade of Gaza which began with Hamas's democratic election as the government of the Palestinian people and the labelling of the entire population of Gaza as a "hostile entity".

As part of the siege, Israel has closed all its border crossings with Gaza and remains in control of all air and sea entrances. Gaza remains an open air prison camp with 1.5 million inmates. The economic blockade has also brought mass unemployment, acute food and

clean water shortages, power cuts, restriction of medical supplies, the destruction of hospitals and regular terror attacks on civilian houses by Israeli planes.

The extent of the suffering which Israel has inflicted is almost beyond comprehension. 80 per cent of the population now relies on food aid - up from 25% before the siege began - and hospitals and clinics are deprived of crucial medicines, while patients die at border crossings as they are not allowed to leave Gaza for treatment. The total economic blockade has prevented fuel supplies entering the territory leading to the shutting down of Gaza's only power plant, plunging the territory into darkness.

Israel insists that if rocket attacks are ceased, then they will allow the normal delivery of supplies to resume. However, the issue motivating the siege is not the Palestinian resistance. After all, during the first Intifada the Palestinians undertook non-violent resistance to the occupation, boycotting Israeli goods and businesses, refusing to work in Israel and carrying out strikes and demonstrations against the occupation. The response was the same. Total economic blockade, cutting off all electricity and attacking peaceful demonstrations.

The picture of Hamas as the aggressor is a plain lie. In fact, Hamas has repeatedly indicated that it would agree to a ceasefire if the IDF stopped targeting its institutions and militants with rocket and air attacks and entered into negotiations with it as the elected authority in Palestine - something the Israeli regime, backed to the hilt by George Bush, absolutely refuses to do. In Bilin, in the West Bank, International activists, Palestinians and Israeli's

protest every Friday against the construction of the apartheid wall on their land. These protests too are routinely met with rubber bullets, baton charges and tear gas despite the non-violent nature of the protests.

The strongest show of resistance came from the Gazans in January when they pulled down the border fence with Egypt and for eleven days were able to get food and other vital supplies. They showed the same courage again in the north of the Gaza Strip when they formed a human chain in a peaceful protest against the Israeli blockade. Israel immediately threatened to open fire if protesters tried to cross the border.

Recent events show that the Palestinians still have a will to fight. They also show that Israel, as an expansionist state, will not abandon their project simply by being asked nicely - the Palestinians will have to fight to regain the land that they've lost and allow the six million Palestinian refugees to return home. This goal is not consistent with the existence of the Israeli state as while Israel exists - a Western puppet in the region - it will not negotiate fair terms with the Palestinians and will certainly not allow the right to return to all refugees as this would completely undermine its *raison d'être* as a Jewish state. This is why we call for one state in which Israeli and Palestinian workers can live together.

The fight of the Palestinians is not simply a fight for land - it is a struggle against imperialism. That is why we, as anti-war and anti-imperialist activists in the West, must stand in solidarity with all those in Palestine and across the Middle East in their struggle for liberation.

Palestine pushed off agenda at NUS

★ BY RACHEL ★ UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA ★

At this year's NUS conference there will be only one motion on Palestine discussed. Since the situation in Gaza is now so intense that even some of the bourgeois media is starting to criticise the Israeli occupation, quite a few motions were submitted by various student unions around the country. At "compositing" two weeks ago (this is where representatives from various unions fight it out to have their motions put to the top of the pile of conference agenda) the right-wing leadership made a presidential ruling that no speeches against the Governance Review were to be allocated, at all. This means that the Governance Review will probably go through which means NUS will be gutted of any politics. They made an astounding attempt at making this the case with or without the new 'constitution' by not including motions such as 'Affiliation to the Academic Boycott of Israel' and putting the one motion regarding Palestinian

'Right to Education in Palestine' at the end of the conference. Traditionally this means that it will not get discussed because conference always tends to overrun and the last motion gets forgotten.

This only goes to highlight the Zionist sympathies of the NUS leadership (please read as New Labour kindergarten). Wes Streeter, currently vice president of Education and most likely to succeed as President, quite foolishly admitted to the following statement: "I pointed out that I didn't recall suicide bombers ever leafleting innocent civilian towns and buses before blowing them up", in regards to an argument over why NUS didn't support an immediate Israeli ceasefire over Lebanon. So, basically, Israel is okay in its actions because it bombs leaflets before shrapnel in Lebanon. (You would have thought that someone training to enter the New Labour spin machine would know not to trust a journalist! But there you go, straight from the

horse's mouth.)

It is quite clear that Gaza will not be discussed at great length at NUS conference this year, although motions such as the ratification of an end-to-NUS-democracy get right the front of the motion queue. Although the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign will hold fringe meetings and stalls, the fact is that NUS is now so un-democratic that matters as crucial as Palestinian solidarity do not make the agenda. Why? Because it 'does not affect British students directly'. Well guess what, our un-capped tuition fees fund universities that gladly invest in arms trading. That means our money is part of the imperialist war machine and we have a 'student union' that could not care less.

For more on the attacks on democracy taking place at this year's NUS conference see *REVOLUTION 88* at www.worldrevolution.org.uk

Deepening conflict in Iraq

★ BY BENO ★ KINGS COLLEGE ★

The Iraqi army, supported by American intelligence and air strikes, has begun a bloody conflict with various Islamic groups opposing the American occupation. The Iraqi army broke a cease-fire established in August 2007 with the resistance fighters Mahdi Army, and began a series of street battles in the port town of Basra.

The violence has now spread to Baghdad and other towns. It is estimated that so far 130 people have been killed. In Basra alone 80 people have died and over 450 have been wounded. In Baghdad, the army has declared a three day lock-down after missiles were fired into the heavily protected 'green zone'.

The Mahdi Army is the armed section of the political group led by the Shia cleric al-Sadr. Over the years al-Sadr has built up popular support among poor, marginalized Iraqis. The organisation is believed to have over 60,000 members and is a popular movement for the resistance to the American led occupation. It is considered by the Pentagon to be the number one threat to the occupying forces in Iraq.

In a written statement, al-Sadr said that "We demand that religious and political leaders intervene to stop the attacks on poor people...We call on all Iraqis to launch protests across all the provinces. If the government does not respect these demands, the second step will be general civil disobedience in Baghdad and the Iraqi provinces."

Support for the opposition to the Iraqi military has been expressed by various demonstrations across Iraq. In Baghdad thousands marched in the streets

calling for the Iraqi PM al-Maliki to resign. In the town of Kazimiyah, protesters labelled al-Maliki the "new dictator". The support of opponents of imperialism is being channelled towards the Mahdi army in the absence of any substantial working class and Socialist forces.

Al-Maliki said that he was waging a war on what he described as "gangs, militias and out-laws" with the aim to "restore the law of the land". However, the rapid escalation of the conflict, and the evidence of popular support by many Iraqi civilians for the so-called militias has made it clear that, under the direction of the Americans, is trying to weaken a popular opponent before the elections scheduled for later this year.

A spokesperson for al-Sadr said "This ongoing operation in Basra appears to be security-related, while, in fact, it is a political one... Al-Mahdi Army is not a military army, as some believe. It is a doctrinal army that serves the society."

Basra is one of the main oil producing regions in Iraq. The war was fought to seize control of these key



economic resources. And so the lives of more Iraqi people - civilians, government troops and militia forces alike - are being sacrificed for the sake of ensuring that the West's oil consumption continues uninterrupted. As the occupying forces are losing morale and territory, the forces of the puppet Iraqi government are taking over the fighting against the resistance. These troops may wear a different uniform but they are still defending imperialist interests and acting to oppress the Iraqi people. We don't share al-Sadr's reactionary politics, but we must still defend the rights of all Iraqis to resist this brutal occupation.

Victory to the resistance!

★ ONE WORLD ★ ONE BATTLE ★

REVOLUTION 11

Wanker of the month

Alexander Boris

de Pfeffel Johnson

Where to start really? The Conservative Party contestant for London Mayor really is a top notch wanker. His 'daffy' and 'eccentric' persona has won him a lot of public support although he is currently trailing Ken in the polls. When he originally announced that he was standing for Mayor Ken let out a massive sigh of relief: surely no one this buffoon-like could beat real politicians. But the scary truth about young 'de Pfeffel' is that he is a real politician- and a very right wing one at that!

His old friend David (former wanker-of-the-month) Cameron, leader of the ever more wankerish Tories, is a fellow old-boy of Eton and Oxford (Tory Wanker Points number 1, tick) and the potential for these two to team up and destroy what little public services we have left is looking increasingly real. Whilst at Oxford he spent most of his time in the Bullingdon Club, an exclusive student dining society known for its 'raucous' feasts - tax payers, guess where your money will go if he gets Mayor! Standard political inexperience for a Tory candidate then! (Tory Wanker Points number 2, tick). What is scary is that his 'buffoonery' thinly conceals some very scary right-wing views and a brief look at his voting record would put hairs on the chest of those who think he is 'just good fun'. It was put quite well when he was described as "a type of Norman Tebbit in clown's uniform." His remarks on Portsmouth two years ago, "one of the most depressed towns in Southern England, a place that is arguably too full of drugs, obesity, underachievement and Labour MPs" pointed



towards what Boris really cannot stand - the working class. His comments on Papua New Guinea, referring to it as a place full of "orgies of cannibalism and chief-killing" (excellent Johnson, really honed in on the 21st century there mate!) evoked some shock. Yet people remain sure that he just a harmless joker! Anti-racist activists have insisted that, by no means, this man should ever get Mayor and his voting record on immigration links him closer to his BNP opponent than anyone else. (Tory Wanker points number three, tick!)

Even more delightful is the news that he is currently under police investigation for theft. In 2003 Johnson stole a cigar case that once belonged to an associate of Saddam Hussein - Boris picked this from the rubble of his house in Baghdad. Indeed I am sure that if any of us were visiting war torn Iraq, and our magpie eyes guided us towards a nifty little cigar case, that would be the priority. Never mind the rest of it. Boris' few words on the case against him were "this is a monumental waste of time". No Boris, you are!

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Independent on Sunday got it right in an "expose" of REVOLUTIONs involvement in organising May Day 2001. It said: "REVOLUTION wants to build a revolutionary socialist mass movement and overthrow capitalism." Exactly right. We are opposed to capitalism and the misery, alienation, war and environmental destruction it creates.

We fight all forms of discrimination and oppression, whether on grounds of sex, race, nationality or sexuality.

Capitalism is a global system, so we have to fight it globally. We want to smash the borders and divisions of nations and move forward to a truly global and united humanity, without bigotry, war and class division. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our sisters and brothers in the Third World struggling to break free of the trillion dollar debt, the IMF, WTO and NATO.

We are socialists - we want to abolish capitalism and replace it with a planned economy. But we do not believe that the capitalist elite will allow their wealth and privilege to be voted out of existence. We believe it will take force to take the power and property away from the few and redistribute into the hands of the many - that means a revolution!

REVO wants young people to participate in radical politics and organise themselves. Young people can be very radical and militant, the anti war movement proved that. They should take a lead in the movement that will shape the struggle for the future.

We believe a mass movement must be built based on the support of the majority of the people - the working class. It is the working class that produces all the wealth in this society. The working class has no interest in keeping capitalism going. Only the working class has the power, the size and the traditions of organisation to bring this rotten system crashing down.

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